

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Case File No.: AA-81315

EA No.: AK-040-99-005

TYPE OF  
ACTION: Right-of-Way for a Buried Telecommunications Cable

LOCATION: T. 26 N., R. 5 W., Section 25,  
Seward Meridian

APPLICANT: Matanuska Telephone Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3550  
Palmer, Alaska 99645-3550

PREPARER: Martin Hansen  
Realty Specialist

PREPARING  
OFFICE: Bureau of Land Management  
Anchorage Field Office  
6881 Abbott Loop Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99507-2599

DATE: December 28, 1998

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

Matanuska Telephone Association (MTA) has installed a pair of underground fiber optic cables through Talkeetna. They need a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) right-of-way (R/W) grant to maintain the 530 feet of cable that cross BLM administered lands. In 1992 when the cable was installed, MTA believed that the authorizations granted by the State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities were adequate. MTA submitted an application to BLM when they learned that they had crossed BLM lands.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan

The lands within the right-of-way are included in the Alaska Southcentral Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), dated March 1980. Activity Objective L-2 of the MFP states that “the needs for rights-of-way are to be satisfied”.

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses

The Matanuska- Susitna Borough does not have a land use plan. The site is within the Talkeetna Subunit of the Talkeetna Management Unit, of the South Parks Highway Subregion of the State of Alaska’s Susitna Basin Area Plan. The plan is silent on telecommunication facilities. The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has issued permits for the portion of the R/W on State managed lands. A coastal zone review will be required for future construction.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is for MTA to operate and maintain a pair of buried fiber optic cables across BLM managed lands at Talkeetna (see attached maps). MTA will receive a R/W grant approximately 530 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 3.5 feet deep.

MTA installed both cables in one trench. The excavation was eight to ten inches wide and three and one-half feet deep. The trench has been back filled and the area cleaned up.

The BLM lands are in Lot 10, Section 25, T. 26 N., R. 5 W., S.M., and Lot 3, Block 17 United States Survey (USS) 1260, Talkeetna Townsite.

This project is partially Rural Utilities System funded and is, therefore, exempt from rent 43 CFR 2803.1-2(b)(1).

B. No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, BLM would require MTA to halt use of the fiber optic cable.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The cables are installed through downtown Talkeetna under the Talkeetna Village Airstrip withdrawal. They run west along the north edge of the extension of Veteran's Way through Lot 10, Section 25 then north between the eastern edge of the landing strip and the western edge of the extension of "D" Street through Lot 10 and across Lot 3, Block 17, USS 1260.

A. Critical Elements of the Human Environment

The following critical elements of the human environment are either not present on BLM managed land or are not affected by the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative:

Air Quality

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Cultural Resources/Paleontological

Environmental Justice

Farm Lands (prime or unique)

Floodplains

Native American Religious Concerns

Subsistence Use Under Section 810 of ANILCA

Threatened or Endangered Species

Wastes, Hazardous or Solid

Water Quality, Drinking/Ground

Wetlands

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wilderness

B. Land Status

The BLM administered lands were withdrawn for airfield purposes by Executive Order 7783 in 1973. BLM can issue R/Ws and permits. There are no State or Native selections.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action

The ground has already been disturbed. Except for the Carsonite stakes marking the alignment, there are no impacts.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts.

C. Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required for the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative.

D. Cumulative Impacts

There will not be any cumulative impacts.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. Persons and Agencies Consulted

Matanuska Telephone Association, Inc., Real Estate and Properties Section  
Bonnie Bailey and Becky Glenn

B. List of Preparers

Martin Hansen, Realty Specialist  
Donna Redding, Archeologist  
Bruce Seppi, Wildlife Biologist  
David Kelley, Surface Protection Specialist